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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 001861

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TAGS: PREL PGOV EAID AF

SUBJECT: PRT/BADGHIS: PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS STEAL  
HUMANITARIAN AID

REF: KABUL 1571

Classified By: A/PolCouns Martin Murphy for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Last winter, the eight-year drought in Badghis ended with torrential rains, which caused major flooding throughout the province. On two occasions, the flooding prompted provincial authorities to request humanitarian assistance (HA) from NGOs and donor countries. The heavy rains, coupled with poor road networks, made HA delivery extremely difficult and verification nearly impossible. Improving weather has enabled PRToff to evaluate HA delivery in Murghab, one of the more contentious and important districts. During the evaluation it became apparent that the current provincial administration lacks the capacity and integrity necessary to effectively manage HA operations. In the district of Murghab, the HA effort led to large-scale robbery by Murghab Provincial Administrator Haji Seifoldin Homedi, who was in charge of HA distribution. Based on visits PRToff made to several towns in Murghab district which Seifoldin claimed had received HA, it has become clear that less than 20 percent of the 30 tons of HA provided during the second round of flood relief reached the intended recipients. Seifoldin was clearly the one who diverted the bulk of the HA, but it is widely believed that he did so with the knowledge of Governor Mohammed Nasim. Pablo Yuste, the Country Director of the Spanish Development Agency, recommends that future HA projects not be undertaken unless UNAMA agrees to provide local staff to personally monitor HA delivery. The wholesale robbery of HA destined for flood victims by one of Nasim's confidants is another reason why Nasim should be removed from office. END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) Heavy rains near the end of March caused heavy flooding and wide calls for assistance. Initial reports provided by provincial authorities said that over 7,000 families had been made destitute by the flooding. The reports claimed damage to infrastructure and livestock beyond all credible belief. On March 28, during a meeting of the disaster response committee Governor Mohammed Nasim supported the reports provided by the teams that had "evaluated" the affected areas, including reports that 300 shops had been

destroyed in a town of around 500 families. The Governor claimed that the village in question had a "strong tradition as traders" and would need a great deal of assistance to recover from the disaster. Participants at the meeting representing donor nations, led by UNAMA and the PRT, questioned the claimed number of victims. By focusing on those families "most affected," the group eventually arrived at the number of 900 families province-wide who required immediate HA. It was agreed that 550 families in Murghab district and 50 families in each of the remaining six districts would receive HA consisting of 50 kilos of wheat, 5 kilos of cooking oil, salt, and various non-food items.

¶13. (SBU) The HA was distributed in each district by a team headed by the district governor with NGO representatives included to verify that the aid was properly delivered. In the case of Murghab district, the NGO representative was a locally-hired member of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Society (RCRC). The bulk of the HA was provided by the Spanish Development Agency (AECI) via the World Food Program (WFP). WFP trucks delivered the bulk of the aid to the Murghab district center in early April, with one truck arriving as late as April 13. All indications are that all the HA arrived in Murghab and was consigned to the team headed by the district administrator Haji Seifoldin Homedi.

¶14. (C) PRToff traveled to Murghab as part of a large presence patrol April 15-20. With the Spanish CIMIC commander, Captain Juan Menendez, PRToff dedicated several days to evaluating HA delivery in the district. In spite of a great deal of anecdotal evidence of impropriety during the much larger first flood relief operation, it was decided to focus on the more recent and smaller HA operation because the

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team had better data on how much HA was actually delivered to the district. On April 16, PRToff and CIMIC commander met with Seifoldin, who characterized both HA operations as very beneficial for local residents. Regarding the second operation he claimed that he was still waiting for one truck, but that the majority of HA had already been distributed to the intended recipients. (NOTE: On April 17 the RCRC representative informed PRToff that the last truck had arrived April 13 and that the HA operation had been concluded. END NOTE.) Seifoldin provided a list of villages that had received assistance, including how many families in each village had received HA. Over the next three days, PRToff and CIMIC commander visited the villages of Joy Ganll, Goncha Ghul, Barakzai, Akazai, and Joy Khwaja, meeting with local elders and flood victims. All five villages had suffered flood damage and all were included as HA recipients on the list provided by Seifoldin.

¶15. (C) Elders in the villages Joy Ganll, Goncha Ghul, Barakzai, and Joy Khwaja reported that their villages were not evaluated by GOA officials after the most recent flooding and that they had received no HA assistance. Barakzai village elder Abdul Jaled stated that Seifoldin sold the HA in the district center's bazaar and sent part of the funds to Nasim. Most elders echoed claims that the HA was sold by Seifoldin or given by him to his associates. Two elders also stated that the RCRC representative was involved in the selling of HA.

¶16. (C) Elder Haji Shiaoak stated that 11 families in the village of Akazai had received HA, and upon request produced two of the recipients. Each recipient stated that he had received a 50 kilogram bag of wheat, 5 liters of oil and a blanket, which they used to sustain their families of 11 and 13 respectively for a period of about two weeks. (NOTE: According to the list provided by Seifoldin, 22 families in Akazai received HA, indicating that even in the rare instances that HA was delivered a large amount of it was diverted. END NOTE.) Shiaoak also stated that he had seen Afghan National Police (ANP) officers loading food and non-food items into police vehicles destined for Qal e Now.

¶17. (C) On May 14, Mullah Badr, one of the most influential Mullahs in Murghab district, opined that HA did reach some of the intended recipients but admitted that there was theft and misappropriation in the distribution process. He added that Seifoldin was the main source of corruption in the district and was deeply involved in diverting resources sent to help the people of the district, especially HA.

¶18. (SBU) Due to time and movement constraints, only those villages closest to the district center were visited and several locals informed members of the PRT that villages in the more remote valleys of Murichang and Panerak did in fact receive HA. Of course the Murichang and Panerak valleys are among the most remote areas of the district and home to a large percentage of the district's poppy fields. Locals claim Seifoldin directed HA to those valleys to increase his influence in some of the most highly profitable poppy areas over which he has limited control. While PRToff cannot confirm these rumors, they track with what has been learned about Seifoldin's involvement in poppy growth in the district (reftel).

¶19. (C) Yuste agrees with PRToff that any future HA programs should only be contemplated if UNAMA provides locally hired staff to monitor the distribution of the aid to the intended recipients. This issue has been discussed with local UNAMA representatives and they agree that the provincial leadership and local members of some NGOs, including RCRC, lack the capacity and integrity to be entrusted with future HA programs. Local leadership has made great strides in disaster evaluation and the logistical challenges involved in relief efforts, but they simply can not be relied on to actually deliver the assistance.

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¶10. (SBU) PRToff and CIMIC commander visited five of the 13 villages that supposedly received HA, and in only one did we encounter people who had actually received assistance. Based upon the interviews conducted PRToff agrees with the opinion expressed by many Murghab elders that something less than 20 percent of the HA sent to the district for the second flood actually reached the intended recipients. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a great deal of the much larger HA response to the first flood was also diverted by Seifoldin, but the evidence is not as clear as with the second HA effort.

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COMMENT  
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¶11. (C) It is clear that Seifoldin diverted HA assistance destined for flood victims, and as with the equally clear evidence of his profiting from poppy cultivation (reftel) it seems certain that Governor Nasim directly profits from Seifoldin actions. Good governance, counter narcotic operations, development, and even basic humanitarian assistance will not be effective in this important district until Seifoldin is replaced, which appears unlikely unless Nasim himself is removed. Nasim illegally appointed his relative Seifoldin as Murghab administrator and has resisted court orders and requests from the Interior Ministry to replace him. Until Nasim and Seifoldin are replaced all efforts in the area of humanitarian assistance meant to gain the support of the local populace will more likely serve to underline local corruption and further erode local support for the GOA.

WOOD